

Congressman Submits Prepared Remarks at Agency's Public Hearing in Binghamton; Says State Must Develop Tougher Standards

Binghamton, NY -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today delivered the following remarks through a representative from his Binghamton office at today's New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) public hearing on the agency's revised draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement for hydraulic fracturing. The congressman could not personally attend today's hearing due to votes in Washington, but will be issuing more in-depth, formal written comments to the DEC in the coming weeks.

Hinchey is a leader in the effort to protect drinking water and the environment from the risks of hydraulic fracturing. He is a co-author of the FRAC Act, which would mandate public disclosure of chemicals used in frack fluid and allow the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate fracking activities under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The congressman also authored the appropriations language that led to the current EPA study on hydraulic fracturing.

"On behalf of Congressman Maurice Hinchey, who is in Washington, DC today for votes, I want to thank the DEC for the opportunity to comment on the revised draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (dSGEIS) on horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus Shale.

"Congressman Hinchey appreciates the hard work that Commissioner Martens and his staff have invested in this document. In addition, DEC has lost many staff over the past few years, making this task all the more difficult.

"Despite this sincere effort, Congressman Hinchey believes that the SGEIS falls far short of what is needed to protect local communities from the risks posed by shale gas drilling and does not fully mitigate potential threats to public health, drinking water, air quality, and municipal infrastructure. Two years ago, in response to the first draft SGEIS, Congressman Hinchey provided 11 detailed recommendations to mitigate the risks of shale gas drilling.

"These included a cumulative impact study, a ban on the use of toxic chemicals in fracking

fluids, a requirement for full public disclosure of all chemicals used in the fracking process, more DEC staff to oversee drilling operations, phased-in development of new well pads, and more. Unfortunately, these recommendations are not included in the new SGEIS and others are only partially addressed.

"We have learned much more about hydraulic fracturing since 2009. More incidents of broken industry promises, harm to local communities, air pollution and water contamination have been reported. Just this week, in Pavillion, Wyoming, the EPA found fracking chemicals in well water. These incidents raise serious new concerns that are not addressed by the revised SGEIS.

"Recently, physicians and other health professionals from around New York State called for full assessment of the public health impacts of gas exploration and production. The SGEIS omits this critical review, and Congressman Hinchey agrees that the state should conduct a health impact assessment.

"In addition, the EPA has begun a new study on the impact of fracking on water resources that Congressman Hinchey initiated. This study is expected to produce initial results by the end of next year. The EPA is also developing rules to protect the public from toxic air pollutants that are emitted by gas drilling sites. The Congressman believes it would be irresponsible and unwise for New York to allow new shale gas drilling before these actions are completed.

"The consequences of failing to safeguard our water resources, air quality, and public health would far outweigh the purported economic benefits associated with drilling. Congressman Hinchey believes the current SGEIS does not provide these protections and should be rejected."

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